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BOSTON - THE THEATRE DISTRICT

Theatre in Boston is strategic to the city's vitality and is an integral part of its cultural life. By generating revenues of 12 million dollars annually, theatre has also proved to be of substantial benefit in sustaining Boston's economic balance. In addition, a bustling Theatre District reacquaints people with the downtown area, promotes tourism, and generally enhances the life of the city.

Over the past two years this Administration has forged a unique partnership with the theatre community and interested private sector representatives to insure the preservation of Boston's role as a national leader in the field of theatre arts. We are strongly committed to the continuation and growth of this important work together in the months and years ahead.

Kevin H. White
Mayor, City of Boston

BOSTON'S THEATRE DISTRICT

Theatre has played a significant role in Boston's cultural life for two centuries, and contributes to the city's reputation as an innovative and dynamic center for the lively arts.

It was the British who introduced stage plays to Boston: during the Revolution they scheduled dramatic performances in Faneuil Hall to keep up the morale of their troops.

During much of the 19th century, repertory companies provided the majority of theatre activity in Boston. Resident groups presented a different play nearly every week, offering "greater and lesser stars in greater and lesser productions," according to Boston theatre critic and historian Elliot Norton.

The expansion of America's railroads after the Civil War resulted in the creation of touring companies. These groups of actors and actresses would perform a single play in a succession of cities and towns, and would mount a new play each year to be presented to their faithful audiences.

In 1900 the Ames family of New York built the Colonial Theatre on

Boylston Street to accommodate touring companies coming to Boston. The Shubert Theatre on Tremont Street followed in 1910, and across from the Shubert, the Wilbur was opened in 1914. These theatres have formed the nucleus of Boston's Theatre District ever since.

The Roaring Twenties was the "movie palace" era, and downtown Boston had its share of these elegant structures. Designed to make the new recreation of moviegoing an experience to be remembered, these theatres boasted ornate interiors in styles ranging from the Baroque to the Oriental. Boston's Music Hall Theatre, built in the Theatre District in 1925 (and originally called the Metropolitan Theatre), is an outstanding example of movie palace architecture, complete with splendid gilding, mirrors and murals, and a Grand Lobby and Grand Stairway fashioned after the Paris Opera House.

Gershwin's "Porgy and Bess" made its world premiere at the Colonial Theatre in 1935. That decade and those following saw the great musicals of Rodgers and Hammerstein on the stages of the Theatre District, along with the works of the leading playwrights of the time. It was during this period that Boston became (and remains today) a leading "tryout" town for New York-bound productions. Directors find Boston audiences enthusiastic, yet sophisticated and discerning—the ideal preparation for tough New York critics and theatregoers.

In recent years Boston theatre has enjoyed a real resurgence, after several seasons in the doldrums. Show after show has played to sold-out houses and extended runs. The 1976-77 season, with more than 27 major productions, broke all records as the most financially successful season in Boston history. After New York City, Boston stands fourth nationally in box office receipts, following the much larger cities of Los Angeles, Washington and Chicago.

This successful theatrical era is not limited only to the "legitimate" stages of Boston. Smaller companies, like the Boston Repertory Theatre (which in 1976

converted an old recording studio into a handsome, 250-seat playhouse on Boylston Place), prove the vitality of the industry and the Theatre District. The Charles Playhouse and Cabaret on Warrenton Street, housed in what was originally a church, like the "Boston Rep" presents an impressive season of plays and musical revues by both New York- and Boston-based performers.

Boston's Theatre District provides further variety in the performing arts at the Music Hall. Under the auspices of the Boston University Celebrity Series, acclaimed international artists perform in this lavish facility. Entrepreneurs bring top-name stars in the world of dance, stage, screen, rock and popular music. Sack Theatres presents a regular schedule of first-run films, and performances by local companies such as the Boston Ballet are also part of the Music Hall's offerings.

THE FUTURE OF THE THEATRE DISTRICT

Thriving theatre companies and successful seasons are strong testimonies to a revitalized Boston Theatre District. Supporting this trend are the Stuart Street Neighborhood Association (the organization of theatres, restaurants, businesses and non-profit institutions in the Theatre District) and the City of Boston, which is represented by several departments and agencies and coordinated by the Mayor's Office of Cultural Affairs. Their collaboration promises further improvements to the district, insuring that Boston will remain a thriving cultural center.

The Boston Redevelopment Authority is coordinating a program of physical improvements in the Theatre District to make a positive impact on the environment experienced by theatre audiences. Most visible is Elliot Norton Park, opened in August 1977 and dedicated to the "dean of Boston theatre critics." This one-acre park offers trees, grass, benches, a fountain, and space for informal theatrical performances.

A dramatic change will occur in the Theatre District with the construction of the State Trans-

portation Office Building, a key component to the Park Plaza urban renewal project. An L-shaped structure extending from New Charles Street in Park Square along Stuart Street to Tremont Street, the Transportation Building is expected to incorporate a pedestrian mall linking Boylston Place with Stuart Street and to contain restaurants and shops to complement the Theatre District.

Other pedestrian improvements include new sidewalks, trees and lighting to create a brighter, greener, safer atmosphere both night and day.

The plans of the Metropolitan Center, Inc. to renovate the Music Hall and return it to its original name, are one of the most exciting prospects for the future of the Theatre District. The non-profit organization intends to convert the 4200-seat theatre—currently unsuitable for large dance and touring companies because its stage is too small and its support facilities inadequate—to a fully equipped and elegant center for the performing arts.

To complement this physical development, the Mayor's Office of Cultural Affairs has worked with the Stuart Street Neighborhood Association to promote theatre in Boston through exhibits and special programs. Support from the Boston Police Department has featured a unit of mounted police who patrol the Theatre District from early evening past final curtain, lending a dashing air to the scene while providing a safer environment for the theatregoers. In addition, Mayor Kevin H. White has established a special task force, the Theatre District Committee, whose mandate is to monitor all the forces working for the betterment of the district, ensuring that they are working in concert and keeping a sharp eye for new or potential concerns that might affect the district.

In sum, the range and quality of the entertaining arts in Boston are unsurpassed anywhere in the country. And Boston is fully committed to a lively Theatre District that will continue to be host to them all.

DIRECTORY TO BOSTON'S THEATRE DISTRICT

SUBSCRIPTIONS

The Boston Repertory Theatre, the Colonial and Wilbur Theatres, and the Hubert Theatre all offer subscription series for the theatre season. For information, call their respective box offices.

Other major series offered in or around the Theatre District include:

- Boston Ballet, 19 Clarendon Street, Boston, MA 02116; 542-3945.
- Boston University Celebrity Series, 31 St. James Avenue, Boston, MA 02116; 482-2595.
- Opera Company of Boston, 711 Boylston Street, Boston, MA 02116; 267-8050.

In addition, ARTS/Boston, a non-profit organization, is dedicated to developing new, permanent audiences or the performing arts in the Greater Boston area, and sponsors a number of programs to encourage attendance. For further information, contact ARTS/Boston, 73 Tremont Street, Boston, MA 02108; 742-6600.

CHARGE SERVICES

All the theatres offer charge services. Tickets may be reserved by telephone, charged to your credit card, and held at the box office until showtime. Some theatres also accept non-paid reservations, provided tickets are picked up and paid for by a specified deadline. Call the box office for further information.

THEATRES

Boston Repertory Theatre

1 Boylston Place
Box office: 423-6580
Quik-Charge: 426-6210

Charles Cabaret
76 Warrenton Street
Box office: 426-2438
Quik-Charge: 426-6210

Charles Playhouse
74 Warrenton Street
Box office: 426-6912
Quik-Charge: 426-6210

Colonial Theatre
106 Boylston Street
Box office: 426-9366
Theatre Charge: 661-5990

Hubert Theatre
265 Tremont Street
Box office: 426-4520

Stage 3
76 Warrenton Street
Box office: 338-7807
Quik-Charge: 426-6210

Wilbur Theatre
252 Tremont Street
Box office: 423-4008
Theatre Charge: 661-5990

MULTI-USE HOUSES
Music Hall
268 Tremont Street
Box office: 423-3300

MOVIE HOUSES
Astor Theatre
176 Tremont Street
Tel: 542-5030
Sack Cinema 57
200 Stuart Street
Tel: 482-1222
Saxon Theatre
219 Tremont Street
Tel: 542-6600

RESTAURANTS
R—reservations recommended
C—credit cards accepted
P—free parking for diners
DR—dress restrictions

Athens Olympia
Greek specialties
51 Stuart Street (2nd floor)
426-6236 R, C, P

Benihana of Tokyo
Japanese
201 Stuart Street
542-1166 R, C, P, DR

The Fan Club
Continental cuisine
Live entertainment, disco dancing
evenings
77 Warrenton Street
357-5050 R, C, DR

57 Restaurant
Continental cuisine
200 Stuart Street
423-5700 R, C, P, DR

The Houndstooth
French country cooking
14 Carver Street
(150 Boylston St., after February 15, 1978)
338-7782 R

The Hungry Pilgrim
Traditional American dishes
Boston Park Plaza Hotel
Park Square
426-2000 C

Jacob Wirth
German American
33 Stuart Street
338-8586 R, C, P, Closed Sundays

Nick's
American cooking, live music
100 Warrenton Street
482-0930 R, C, P, Closed Sundays

Sam's Beef and Ale House
American cooking
274 Tremont Street
542-1484 R, C

The Seventh Inn
Natural and Japanese foods
67-71 Providence Street
261-3965 C

The Shrimp Dock
Seafood
63 Stuart Street
482-9035

COFFEE SHOPS/FAST FOOD
Athens Coffee Shop
275 Tremont Street
426-1400

Jay's Sub Shop
253 Tremont Street
338-9703

The Met Coffee Shoppe
272 Tremont Street
426-2726

HOTELS

Bradford Hotel
275 Tremont Street
426-1400
57 Motor Hotel
200 Stuart Street
423-5700
Boston Park Plaza Hotel
Arlington Street at Park Square
426-2000

LOUNGES

Alfie's
255 Tremont Street
338-8376 No food; live music Tues.-Sat. evenings

TICKET AGENCIES

Hub Ticket Agency
240 Tremont Street
426-8340
Tyson Ticket Agency
236 Tremont Street
426-2662

EMERGENCY HEALTH CARE
Tufts-New England Medical Center
Emergency Services
185 Harrison Avenue
956-5566

BOSTON REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Robert L. Farrell, *Chairman*
Joseph J. Walsh, *Vice Chairman*
James G. Colbert, *Treasurer*
James K. Flaherty, *Assistant Treasurer*
James E. Cofield, Jr., *Member*
Kane Simonian, *Secretary*
Robert F. Walsh, *Director*



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